

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MILI, PINT, VS

SUBJECT: NVA/VC TREATMENT OF PEOPLE IN RECENTLY CAPTURED AREAS

REF: STATE 4720 #

DEPT PASS TO IBS/NCA AND NSC

1. FOLLOWING ARE SEVERAL FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNTS, MOSTLY EYE-WITNESSES, OF NVA/VC TREATMENT OF PEOPLE IN RECENTLY CAPTURED AREAS WHICH WERE OBTAINED BY LANGUAGE QUALIFIED EMBOFF WHO INTERVIEWED SCORES OF REFUGEES WHO REACHED SAFETY BEHIND GVN LINES AFTER FLEEING NVA/IH CENTRAL HIGHLANDS AND COASTAL LOWLANDS OF MR 1 AND MR 2.

2. THE HIGHLANDS CONVOY. PEOPLE WHO ESCAPED FROM PHU SEN VILLAGE, LONG A VC STRONGHOLD (SON HOA DISTRICT, PHU YEN) SAY THAT RVNAF SOLDIERS CAPTURED FROM THE CONVOY BETWEEN PHU TUC DISTRICT TOWN (PHU BON) AND SON HOA DISTRICT TOWN WERE TAKEN TO PHU SEN FOR DETENTION. RATHER THAN LEAVE THE NECESSARY NUMBER OF GUARDS WITH THE SOLDIERS, THE NVA SHOT THEM THROUGH THE FEET SO THEY COULD NOT RUN AWAY. THE NUMBER OF SOLDIERS WAS PUT AT "OVER TWO HUNDRED".

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3. A MAN FROM PLEIKU SAID THAT ENEMY ARTILLERY DESTROYED A FLOATING

BRIDGE JUST INSIDE PHU YEN NEAR THE PHU BON BORDER BEFORE THE LAST THIRD OF THE CONVOY--ABOUT 100,000 PEOPLE-- WERE ABLE TO CROSS THE RAIN-SWOLLEN RIVER. HE HAD LOST TRACK OF THE DATE, BUT BELIEVES THIS OCCURRED ON THE 23RD OR 24TH OF MARCH. ENEMY MORTAR AND RECOILLESS RIFLE FIRE CONTINUED TO POUR INTO THE MOSTLY CIVILIAN CROWD FROM THE REAR AND BOTH SIDES, AND PEOPLE AT THE RIVER'S EDGE WERE DRIVEN INTO THE WATER BY THEIR OWN PANIC AND BY THE PRESS OF THE TERRORIZED CROWD BEHIND THEM. NONE MADE IT ACROSS. THE BARRAGE AND THE RIVER KILLED SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE, THE INFORMANT SAID; ALL OF THE 100,000 WERE EITHER KILLED OR CAPTURED.

4. THE ENEMY MOVED IN AND THE FIRE STOPPED. WHILE THEY WERE TRYING TO SEPARATE OUT SOLDIERS AND MILITARY AGE MEN, AND OLDER MEN FROM WOMEN AND CHILDREN, VNAF FIGHTER-BOMBERS APPEARED OVERHEAD. AWARE OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING, THE PILOTS DROPPED BOMBS AROUND THE EDGE OF THE MASS OF PEOPLE. WHEN THIS FAILED TO DETER THE ENEMY'S WORK, THEY BEGAN DROPPING ORDNANCE IN THE CROWD ITSELF. AGAIN FRIGHTENED BEYOND CONTROL, THEY BROKE AND RAN INTO THE BRUSH WHILE VC SHOT AND KILLED AS MANY AS THEY COULD. MOST NOT KILLED WERE RECAPTURED, THE MAN BELIEVES; A FEW LIKE HIMSELF GOT FAR ENOUGH DOWNSTREAM TO FIND A FORDING PLACE. MOST OF THESE DIED OF EXHAUSTION OR STARVATION BEFORE THEY REACHED TUY HOA. HE WOULD NOT ESTIMATE HOW MANY PEOPLE DIED ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER OR IN IT, SAYING ONLY "SEVERAL THOUSAND, SEVERAL THOUSAND". A NUN WHO WAS NEAR THE FRONT OF THE CONVOY (NOW LIVING WITH HER ORDER AT REGINA PACIS IN SAIGON) SAID THAT WHEN THE CONVOY PASSED NEAR THE DOWNSTREAM DONG CAM DAM, SOLDIERS TOLD HER THE WATER BEHIND THE DAM WAS CHOKED WITH BODIES.

5. AN ARVN ENGINEER, PART OF THE TEAM TRYING TO CLEAR THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS FOR THE CONVOY WHEN MINES WERE STRUCK, FOUND, OR SUSPECTED ON PORTIONS OF THE ROAD, RECOUNTED THE FOLLOWING MASSACRE: THE VANGUARD OF THE CONVOY STOPPED FOR THE NIGHT SHORT OF PHU TU HAMLET IN PHU YEN, PROBABLY ABOUT THE SAME TIME THE MASSACRE OF THE REAR WAS ENDING AT THE FLOATING BRIDGE. ABOUT A THOUSAND PEOPLE NEAR THE FRONT, MOST OF THEM CIVILIAN FAMILIES ON HONDAS, WERE IMPATIENT WITH THE SLOW PROGRESS. DRIVEN BY DESPERATION, EXHAUSTION, HUNGER AND THE KNOWLEDGE UNCLASSIFIED

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THAT THEY HAD CROSSED INTO THE PROVINCE THAT HELD THE END OF THEIR JOURNEY, THEY SNAKED THEIR WAY PAST THE LEAD ARVN TANKS THE NEXT MORNING AND, EN MASSE, RAN INTO A VC AMBUSH WEST OF PHU THU. THE GROUP WAS CUT TO PIECES, DESPITE ITS OBVIOUSLY BEING MOSTLY CIVILIAN. ALL MEN (AND MOST OTHERS) NOT KILLED WERE CAPTURED AND TAKEN AWAY; THE ONLY PEOPLE LEFT WERE SOME WOMEN AND CHILDREN, WHO MADE IT BACK TO THE MAIN CONVOY IN TERROR. IT TOOK THE MAIN CONVOY SEVERAL DAYS TO FIGHT ITS WAY

PAST THIS POINT.

6. SEVERAL PEOPLE FROM KONTUM REPORT THAT FR. CONG, ONE OF THEIR PRIESTS, WAS KILLED ON THE SPOT WHEN HE WALKED OUT IN FRONT OF A GROUPS OF HIS PARISHONERS TO TALK TO VIET CONG WHO BARRED THEIR WAY, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN PLEIKY CITY AND CHEO REO (PHU BON).

7. BAN ME THUOT. THO TRUONG HAMLET NEAR BAN ME THUO WAS PEOPLE ENTIRELY BY 1954 REFUGEES FROM THE NORTH. THE HAMLET'S PF AND PSDF, WITH NO OUTSIDE HELP, HELD OUT UNDER CONSTANT ATTACK UNTIL TWO DAYS AFTER BAN ME THUOT HAD FALLEN. A MEASURE OF THE ENEMY'S DETERMINATION THERE IS THAT SIX OR SEVEN TANKS WERE COMMITTED AND SUBSEQUENTLY DESTROYED BY PF-FIRED LAWS BEFORE THE HAMLET'S AMMUNITION RAN OUT AND ALL RESISTANCE DISAPPEARED. MORE ENEMY TANKS ROLLED IN THEN AND SHELLED THE CHURCH TO RUBBLE. ALL BUT A FEW OF THE SURVIVING POPULATION HAD TAKEN REFUGEE, AND DIED THERE. THIS INFORMATION IS FROM A WOMAN WHO RAN INTO THE JUNGLE WHEN THE FIGHTING STARTED AND STAYED UNTIL IT WAS OVER.

8. A YOUTH WHO FLED FROM BAN ME THUOT IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF 10 MAR, SOON AFTER THE ATTACK AGAINST THE CITY STARTED, FOUND HIMSELF PART OF A MIXED RVNAF-CIVILIAN GROUP OF AN ESTIMATED 5,000 OR 6,000 PEOPLE WHO WERE TRYING TO GET TO THE COAST.

9. ON THE 14TH, THEY RAN INTO SOME ENEMY SOLDIERS WHO ORDERED THEM TO STOP BUT WHO WERE TOO FEW IN NUMBER TO ENFORCE THE ORDER. ABOUT A HUNDRED OF THE GROUP WERE CAUGHT BUT THE REST EVADED AND GRADUALLY RE-ASSEMBLED ALONG THE LOGGING ROAD THEY HAD BEEN FOLLOWING. LATER IN THE DAY, IN A CLEARING, THEY WERE SURROUNDED BY ABOUT FIFTEEN MOTOLOVA TRUCKS THAT BEGAN DRIVING AT HIGH SPEED THROUGH THE CROWD, THE DRIVERS APPARENTLY TRYING TO KILL AS MANY PEOPLE AS THEY COULD. THE PEOPLE BROKE OUT OF UNCLASSIFIED

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THE CLEARING AND INTO THE WOODS, BUT NOT BEFORE--ACCORDING TO THE YOUNG MAN--ABOUT FIFTY OR SIXTY WERE KILLED.

10. DANANG TWO MIDDLE-AGED MEN FROM DANANG RELATED THE FOLLOWING: ON THE 28TH, 29TH AND 30TH OF MARCH, THE ENEMY SET UP A MORTAR POSITION NEAR THE CITY SIDE OF THE TRINH MINH THE BRIDGE AND SHELLED PEOPLE MASSED ON THE QUAI, HOPING FOR EVACUATION. THE USUAL PATTERN WAS 20 TO 30 ROUNDS PER HOUR, AN HOUR'S PAUSE, AND REPETITION. ON THE 29TH, ONE OF THE TWO MEN IN THE CROWD SAID THAT ABOUT FIFTY PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND MANY MORE WOUNDED DURING A HALF-HOUR PERIOD BEFORE HE PANICKED AND LEFT.

11. AT 0400 ON 31 MAR, A YOUNG PSDF MEMBER RETURNED TO A HOUSE HE SHARED WITH TWO OLDER BROTHERS IN THE BROTHERS' 303RD RF BATTALION DEPENDENTS COMPOUND. AN OLD WOMAN STOPPED HIM AT THE

COMPOUND GATE AND TOLD HIM HIS BROTHERS WERE DEAD AND VC WERE WAITING FOR HIM INSIDE. HE APPROACHED THE HOUSE AND FIRED IN THE AIR; TWO VC RAN OUT AND HE SAYS HE WOUNDED BOTH BUT THEY ESCAPED. INSIDE THE HOUSE HE FOUND BOTH BROTHERS WITH THEIR THROATS CUT, AND HIS TWO SISTER-IN-LAW BOUND, GAGGED AND IN SHOCK. HE TOOK THE WOMEN AND THEIR SMALL CHILDREN AWAY, AND IN SO DOING WAS TOLD THAT ALL RF SOLDIERS AND SOME DEPENDENTS CAUGHT IN THE COMPOUND HAD BEEN KILLED THE SAME WAY AS HIS BROTHERS. THERE IS INFORMATION, UNCONFIRMED BUT CONSIDERED RELIABLE, THAT THE SAME THING HAPPENED AT THE 44TH ARVN REGIMENT (23 DIVISION) REAR HQ AND DEPENDENTS AREA, NEAR THE BAN ME THUOT PROVINCIAL AIRFIELD.

MARTIN

NOTE BY OC/T: #REF STATE 4720 BELIEVED TO BE INCORRECT.

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